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POLITICAL ANALYSIS: JAPAN: THE JCP FACES ELECTIONS

1. JAPAN'S COMMUNIST PARTY APPROACHES GENERAL ELECTIONS

THIS YEAR HANDICAPPED BY TACTICAL AND POLICY PROBLEMS THAT

WILL LIMIT IT TO GAINS FAR MORE MODEST THAN THOSE IT WON

IN 1972. THE FUNDAMENTAL CONSERVATISM OF THE JAPANESE

HAS FORCED THE COMMUNISTS TO RELY ON THE INDEPENDENT PRO-

TEST VOTE, IN TURN MAKING THE PARTY PECULIARLY VULNERABLE

TO SHIFTS IN POPULAR ATTITUDES. AN INCREASING CONVERGENCE

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OF VOTER AND GOVERNMENT VIEWS AND AN ANTI-COMMUNIST SCARE

CAMPAIGN--INITIATED LAST MONTH BY THE MODERATE DEMOCRATIC

SOCIALISTS--MAY TEST THE JCP'S ABILITY TO MAINTAIN AND

BROADEN ITS APPEAL BEFORE THE ELECTIONS, WHICH COULD TAKE

PLACE AS EARLY AS APRIL.

2. PAST GAINS -- 1972 AND 1974: PRIOR TO THE GENERAL ELECTION OF DECEMBER 1972, THE JCP'S LACK OF ELECTORAL SUCCESS KEPT COMMUNIST INFLUENCE ON THE JAPANESE POLITICAL STAGE TO A MINIMUM. AS A RESULT OF THE ELECTION, HOWEVER, THE JCP WON PUBLIC RECOGNITION AS A SERIOUS POLITICAL FORCE. IT THEN ASSUMED A HIGHER PROFILE AND CONTRIBUTED TO INCREASING POLITICAL POLARIZATION IN THE DIET.

3. WHEN THE DIET RECESSED IN 1972, THE COMMUNISTS HAD ONLY 14 SEATS IN THE 491-MEMBER HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMANDED LESS THAN 7 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE, AND WERE THE SMALLEST OF JAPAN'S FIVE PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES. FOLLOWING THE ELECTION, THE JCP HELD 40 SEATS, CLAIMED A 10.5 PERCENT SHARE OF THE ELECTORATE, AND WAS THE SECOND LARGEST OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES.

4. IN THE UPPER HOUSE ELECTION OF 1974, THE COMMUNISTS AGAIN SCORED SUBSTANTIAL GAINS. THE 1972 AND 1974 ADVANCES QUALIFIED THE PARTY FOR NEW LEGISLATIVE PRIVILEGES: THE RIGHT TO INTRODUCE NON-BUDGETARY BILLS; A PLACE ON DIET MISSIONS SENT ABROAD; THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF ONE COMMITTEE IN EACH HOUSE; AND A SEAT ON THE DIRECTORATES OF MOST OTHER COMMITTEES.

5. FOUR FACTORS HAVE BEEN PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COMMUNIST GAINS:

(A)--THE JCP'S IMAGE AS THE MOST POTENT VEHICLE OF POLITICAL PROTEST ATTRACTS MANY INDEPENDENT VOTERS WHO WANT AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF REGISTERING DISSATISFACTION WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF THE RULING LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (LDP).

(B)--A SIZABLE AND WELL-DISCIPLINED MEMBERSHIP IS MOBILIZED YEAR-ROUND TO CULTIVATE VOTERS. THIS LAVISH USE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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MANPOWER IS MOST EFFECTIVE IN RECRUITING THE GEOGRAPHICALLY MOBILE VOTER IN SUBURBAN DISTRICTS.

(C)--A STEADY FUNDING BASE IS DERIVED FROM A PUBLISHING EMPIRE, INCLUDING SALES OF THE DAILY AKAHATA. ALTHOUGH THE JCP'S INCOME FALLS WELL BELOW THAT OF THE LDP, THE COMMUNISTS ARE THE ONLY WELL-FINANCED OPPOSITION PARTY.

(D)--COMMUNIST CONTROL OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS--PARTICULARLY IN TOKYO, KYOTO, OSAKA, AND YOKOHAMA--HAS HELPED THE PARTY GAIN ACCESS TO THE BIG-CITY VOTE.

6. BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE -- 1973 TO 1975: SINCE 1972, THE JCP HAS BEEN TORN IN TWO DIRECTIONS IN ATTEMPTING TO BROADEN FURTHER ITS MASS APPEAL AND BUILD UPON THE LOWER HOUSE AND UPPER HOUSE GAINS. ON THE ONE HAND, ITS SUCCESS AS A PARTY OF PROTEST HAS ENCOURAGED IT TO TAKE THE LEAD IN ATTACKING THE GOVERNMENT AND TRYING TO BRING THE OPPOSITION PARTIES INTO A GRAND FRONT AGAINST THE LDP. THE COMMUNISTS HAVE FINE-TUNED THE ART OF EMBARRASSING TOKYO, UNEARTHING SECRETS WITH DRAMATIC SUCCESS IN THE AREAS OF GOVERNMENT-BUSINESS RELATIONS AND US MILITARY OPERATIONS IN JAPAN. IN EARLY 1974 JCP EXPOSURE OF IRREGULARITIES IN RADIOACTIVITY MONITORING FORCED A TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF PORT CALLS BY US NUCLEAR-POWERED SHIPS, WHILE THE PARTY'S DOCUMENTATION OF PRICE-FIXING AMONG JAPAN'S LARGEST TRADING HOUSES RESULTED IN A PRECEDENT-SETTING DIET INTERROGATION OF BUSINESS LEADERS.

7. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE JCP HAS TRIED TO MINIMIZE THE POINTS AT WHICH ITS POLICIES CLASH WITH DOMESTIC POLITICAL TRENDS AND TO PORTRAY A GENERALLY MORE MODERATE IMAGE. WIDESPREAD RESIDUAL FEAR OF THE PARTY AND THE VERY NARROW BASE OF JAPANESE PUBLIC OPINION THAT SUPPORTS THE JCP SOLELY FOR IDEOLOGICAL REASONS HAVE NECESSITATED SUCH ACCOMMODATION. LITTLE MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF THOSE VOTING FOR THE COMMUNISTS ARE REGULAR JCP SUPPORTERS, AND MANY OF THIS GROUP ARE BOUND TO THE PARTY BY ITS SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS RATHER THAN BY ITS POLICY POSITIONS. IN THE 1972 GENERAL ELECTIONS, THE JCP HAD THE HIGHEST RATE OF DEPENDENCE ON THE "FLOATING VOTE" AND THE SECOND-LOWEST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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RATE OF VOTES DERIVED FROM ITS OWN SUPPORTERS.

8. MIXED SUCCESS IN ACCOMMODATION: AS THE 1976 GENERAL ELECTIONS NEAR, AND AS THE OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES MODERATE THEIR OWN POLICY POSITIONS, THE JCP HAS GIVEN INCREASING PRIMACY TO PROMOTING A RESPONSIBLE, RATHER THAN COMBATIVE, IMAGE. THE PARTY RECENTLY HAS SOUGHT TO ASSOCIATE ITSELF WITH THE PRAGMATISM OF EUROPE'S COMMUNISTS. IT HAS VOICED SUPPORT FOR THE IMPERIAL INSTITUTION, IF THIS IS THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE. IT HAS SUBSTANTIALLY MODERATED ITS FORMER OPPOSITION TO THE EXISTENCE OF THE JAPANESE SELF-DEFENSE FORCES.

9. ON OTHER CRITICAL ISSUES, SUCH AS JAPAN'S DEFENSE RELATIONS WITH THE US, HOWEVER, IT HAS BEEN UNABLE TO COMPROMISE LONGSTANDING POLICY POSITIONS AND IS INCREASINGLY OUT OF STEP WITH PUBLIC OPINION. A DEMAND FOR THE ABROGATION OF THE MUTUAL SECURITY TREATY (MST) STILL KEYNOTES THE JCP PLATFORM, DESPITE GROWING APPRECIATION OF THE MST ON THE PART OF THE JAPANESE PUBLIC, THE MEDIA,

AND THE NON-COMMUNIST LEFT. A RECENT NEWSPAPER POLL INDICATES THAT JCP SUPPORTERS ARE THEMSELVES EVENLY SPLIT IN FAVOR OF AND OPPOSITION TO THE TREATY.

10. THE ISSUE OF THE MST TYPIFIES THE DIFFICULTIES THAT THE JCP FACES AS IT FINDS INCREASINGLY FEW OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPLOIT VOTER AND GOVERNMENT DIFFERENCES. ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT, EXTENDED RECESSION HAS FORCED THE LDP TO ADAPT TO THE LOWER ECONOMIC GROWTH RATES LONG DEMANDED BY THE JAPANESE LEFT, WHILE FORCING ORGANIZED LABOR TO ADOPT MORE MODERATE POSITIONS IN MAKING WAGE DEMANDS. THE ELECTORATE MAY BE MORE WILLING NOW THAN IN 1972 TO PULL TOGETHER IN SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT; AND SUPPORT FOR THE JCP, AS THE CHAMPION OF PROTEST, COULD DECLINE.

11. DANGERS OF THE SCARE CAMPAIGN: THE CURRENT ANTI-COMMUNIST SCARE CAMPAIGN COULD ALSO CUT BACK THE JCP'S APPEAL TO THE INDEPENDENT VOTER. LAST MONTH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST PARTY (DSP), JAPAD'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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SMALLEST AND MOST MODERATE OPPOSITION PARTY, STUNNED TOKYO BY RAISING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GUILT OF JCP CHAIRMAN KENJI MIYAMOTO IN CONNECTION WITH A 1933 LYNCHING. THE ATTACK, THE FIRST EVER MADE BY ONE JAPANESE PARTY HEAD AGAINST ANOTHER ON THE FLOOR OF THE DIET, APPARENTLY WAS INTENDED TO STEM THE GROWING APPEAL OF THE JCP TO YOUNG VOTERS WHO ARE UNAWARE OF THE PARTY'S PAST HISTORY OF REVOLUTIONARY AND VIOLENT ACTIVITIES. THE DIET ATTACK COINCIDED WITH THE PUBLICATION OF ARTICLES IN THE RESPECTED MONTHLY BUNGEI SHUNJU CHALLENGING THE JCP'S COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT.

12. EFFORTS TO UNDERMINE MIYAMOTO'S REPUTATION AND DESTROY THE PEACEFUL, DEMOCRATIC IMAGE OF THE JCP THAT HE HAS SO PAINSTAKINGLY BUILT WILL LIKELY CONTINUE AS ALL FOUR OF JAPAN'S NON-COMMUNIST PARTIES TRY TO PREVENT JCP GAINS IN THE GENERAL ELECTION. IN 1972 COMMUNIST ADVANCES NEARLY PUT THE DSP OUT OF BUSINESS AND CAUSED SIGNIFICANT INROADS INTO THE STRENGTH OF THE SOCIALISTS, THE KOMEITO, AND THE RULING LDP AS WELL. THE DSP HOPES THAT ITS CURRENT ATTACK ON THE JCP WILL TRIGGER A MORE MODEST VERSION OF THE WAVE OF ANTI-COMMUNIST FEAR THAT SWEEPED JAPAN TWO DECADES AGO, WHEN THE PARTY RESORTED TO VIOLENCE AND THE RESULTANT PUBLIC TURN AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS CAUSED THE LOSS OF ALL ITS DIET SEATS.

13. OUTLOOK FOR 1976 ELECTIONS: IF THE FEAR CAMPAIGN

DOES NOT SUCCEED, THE ORGANIZATIONAL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES OF THE JCP SHOULD--DESPITE A POSSIBLE DECLINE IN THE PROTEST VOTE--ENSURE SOME COMMUNIST GAINS IN THE COMING ELECTION. THESE ADVANCES WILL, HOWEVER, BE FAR MORE MODEST THAN THOSE OF 1972 AND MAY BRING THE PARTY CLOSE TO THE UPPER LIMITS OF ITS POTENTIAL STRENGTH. GROWTH IN THE PERCENTAGE OF JAPANESE WHO IDENTIFY WITH THE JCP HAS SLOWED, AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS HELD IN THE THREE YEARS SINCE THE LAST GENERAL ELECTION SUGGEST THAT COMMUNIST SUPPORT IN THE LARGEST CITIES MAY BE NEAR ITS PEAK.

14. THE JCP WILL FACE, IN ADDITION, SPECIAL TACTICAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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PROBLEMS THIS YEAR:

(A)--AS MANY AS 10 OF THE 40 SEATS TAKEN BY THE JCP IN 1972 ARE ONLY "BORDERLINE SAFE," AND THE PARTY MAY, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 15 YEARS, LOSE SOME OF ITS INCUM0ENCIES. VULNERABLE DISTRICTS INCLUDE SEVERAL WON IN 1972 BY PAPER-THIN MARGINS, AND SOME GAINED WHERE THE LDP RAN TOO MANY CANDIDATES IN ONE DISTRICT BUT CAN NOW CONCENTRATE FORCES TO RETAKE THE SEATS. OTHER SEATS WERE TAKEN IN AREAS CASTING GRIEVANCE VOTES ON ISSUES THAT ARE NO LONGER CONTENTIOUS. A FEW MAY BE LOST OWING TO CITY REDISTRICTING.

(B)--THE MASSIVE GAINS OF 1972 GAVE THE COMMUNISTS A SEAT IN ALL DISTRICTS OF JAPAN'S KEY CITIES (TOKYO, OSAKA, KYOTO) AND IN MOST METROPOLITAN SUBURBS. IF THE JCP IS TO ACHIEVE MORE THAN MODEST GAINS THIS YEAR, IT WILL HAVE TO WIN IN MIXED URBAN-RURAL DISTRICTS, WHERE IT IS MORE DIFFICULT TO FIND LEFT-WING SUPPORT.

15. THE ADDITION OF 20 SEATS IN URBAN PREFECTURES OFFERS THE COMMUNISTS SOME OPPORTUNITY TO INCREASE THEIR REPRESENTATION IN THE CITIES, BUT SINCE THE REDISTRICTING HAS BEEN ENGINEERED TO FAVOR THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS AND THE SOCIALISTS, THE OVERALL JCP SHARE OF CITY SEATS MAY DECLINE. THE PARTY MAY PICK UP SOME SEATS AND WIN AN INCREASE IN POPULAR VOTE IN SUBURBAN AND SECONDARY INDUSTRIAL AREAS. IN RURAL AREAS, INTENSIVE COMMUNIST ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORTS AND THE INCREASING INABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT THE ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF FARMERS AND FISHERMEN SHOULD SPELL A SOMEWHAT LARGER JCP VOTE, BUT THE INCREASE PROBABLY WILL NOT RESULT IN ADDITIONAL SEATS. INGERSOLL

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